

Zoning Recommendations

The following zoning recommendations for Eastern Cambridge emerged from the context, analysis and vision described in the previous chapters and were forwarded to the Planning Board in April 2001. Based on these recommendations the Planning Board filed the Eastern Cambridge Rezoning Petition with the City Council in June 2001. At the time of writing, the petition is under consideration by the City Council and the Planning Board and final action is expected in Fall 2001. Interested parties should contact the City Clerk or check the City's website at:
<<http://www.ci.cambridge.ma.us/~CDD/commplan/zoning/zord/index.html>> for the most current zoning for Eastern Cambridge.

Recommendations

NORTH POINT

The North Point area is envisioned as a mixed-use neighborhood with housing as a dominant use – a place to live, work, and enjoy a variety of parks and public spaces. ECaPS PUD zoning would:

- Require at least 65% residential development with a maximum of 35% commercial development and create an overall cap on non-residential parking for the district.
- Reduce automobile traffic generated by the site – by setting an FAR of 2.4 for a mixed-use project, but allowing FAR to increase up to 3.0 as the percent of residential use increases, since residential uses generate less peak hour traffic.
- Reduce the parking required on site by 20 percent from the Citywide Rezoning Proposal and require corresponding auto vehicle trip reduction measures.

...NORTH POINT

- Establish lower heights closer to the East Cambridge residential neighborhood and taller heights farther away.
- Encourage retail uses to support the new neighborhood that will complement, not compete with, existing retail on Cambridge Street.
- Require the creation of a major new public park easily accessible from the relocated Lechmere T station.

In addition, proposed Design Guidelines would encourage:

- Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections to East Cambridge.
- Retail uses at the relocated Lechmere T station to connect North Point and Cambridge Street
- Lower heights around public spaces and close to the existing East Cambridge neighborhood.



Urban Design Principles



Illustrative Redevelopment Conceptual Study

EXISTING

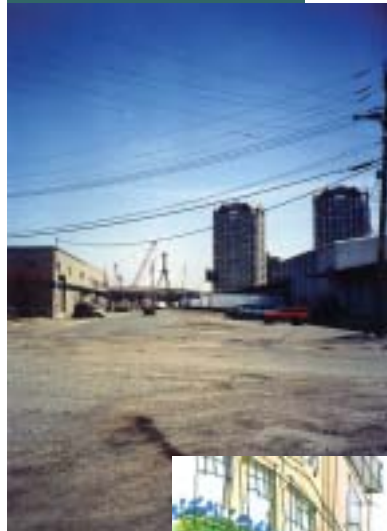


Illustration of new pedestrian friendly mixed-use street through the heart of North Point.

EXISTING



Illustration of possible reconfiguration of the intersection of First and Cambridge Streets to create a more lively and pedestrian-friendly connection to North Point.

EXISTING



Illustrative study of new blocks to orient around a new main street.

1



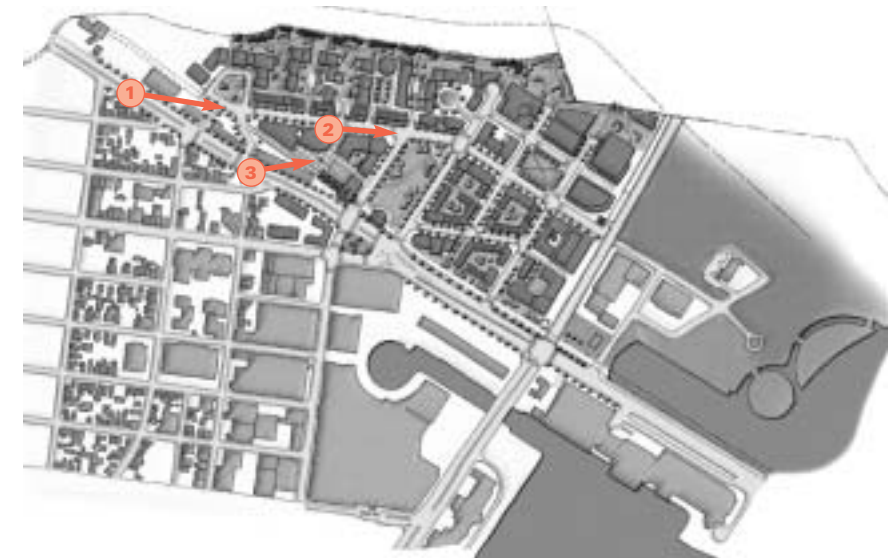
Organizing principles to include strong connections to First Street and Cambridge Street, variety of blocks, and new neighborhood parks.

3



Illustrative study of increasing height towards railyards, away from the Eastern Cambridge neighborhood.

2



VOLPE CENTER

Zoning recommendations for the Volpe Center area reflect the desire for housing and open space in the Kendall Square area to help enliven the area during all hours of the day. The proposed PUD zoning for this area would:

- Create a transition in land uses from Broadway to the residential neighborhoods – by requiring residential development to the north and mixed-use development to the south.
- Require lower heights closer to the neighborhoods and allow taller heights closer to commercial development on Broadway.
- Establish a minimum required amount of housing and a maximum allowable amount of office and R&D to create a strong residential presence in the area.
- Require a major new public park facing Binney Street and connecting to Third St. and Broadway. The park should be inviting and accessible to the existing residential neighborhoods and transition areas.
- Encourage retail on Third Street and Broadway to create active street life in Kendall Square.

In addition, new proposed Design Guidelines would encourage:

- Open spaces throughout the site to link the community with Kendall Square.
- Strong bicycle and pedestrian connections to the Broad Canal and the Charles River.



Urban Design Principles



Illustrative Redevelopment
Conceptual Study

EXISTING



Illustrative study of mixed-use development along Third Street to create a vibrant pedestrian connection between Kendall Square and the neighborhood.

EXISTING



Illustration of a new park on the Volpe site to serve existing residents as well as those in the proposed residential development adjacent to the park.



Illustrative study shows variety of blocks, transition in height, enlivened Third Street, and large neighborhood park. The park should be inviting and accessible to the existing residential neighborhoods and transition areas.

EXISTING



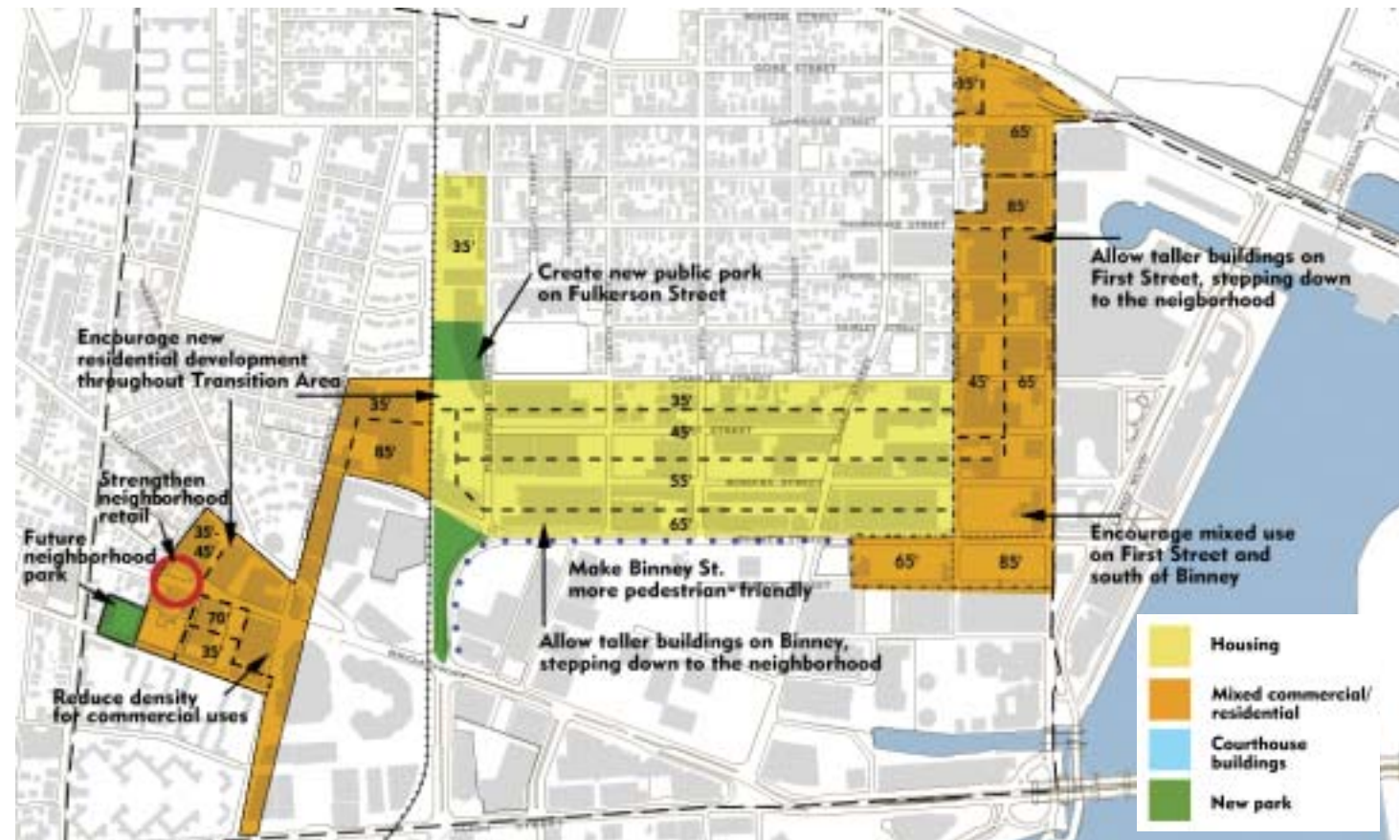
TRANSITION AREAS

The Transition Areas lie between the residential neighborhoods of East Cambridge, Wellington-Harrington, and Area IV and the commercial development in Kendall Square. The primary goals for these areas are to encourage residential uses and create a transition in heights from the neighborhoods to Kendall Square. The ECaPS zoning changes would:

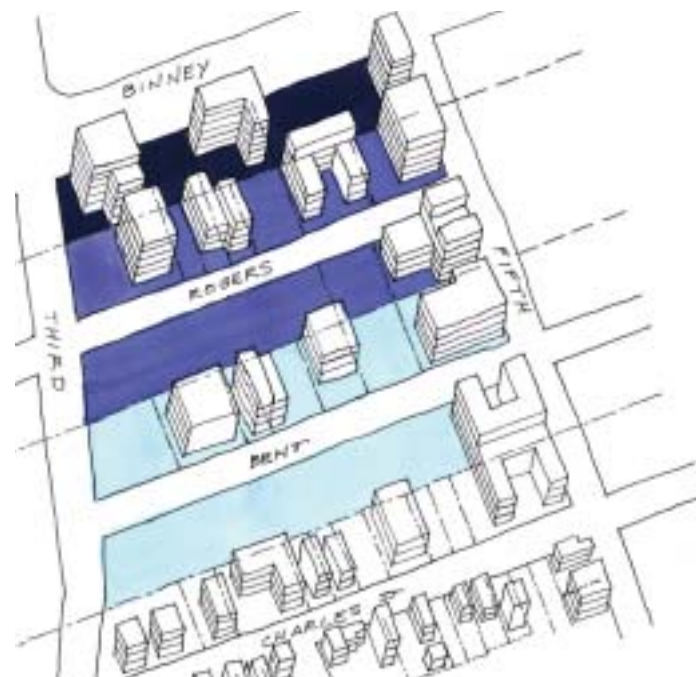
- Encourage new residential development and conversion of existing buildings to residential use; existing commercial uses would be allowed to remain as conforming uses.
- Create a 2:1 differential in residential and commercial Floor Area Ratios (FARs) through the creation of an Eastern Cambridge Housing Overlay (ECHO).
- Apply new, finely graduated height limits.
- Encourage ground floor retail along First Street.
- Allow for Transfers of Development Rights (TDRs) to allow commercial development rights to be transferred to areas south of Binney Street and encourage conversion of areas north of Binney Street to residential.

In addition, new proposed Design Guidelines would encourage:

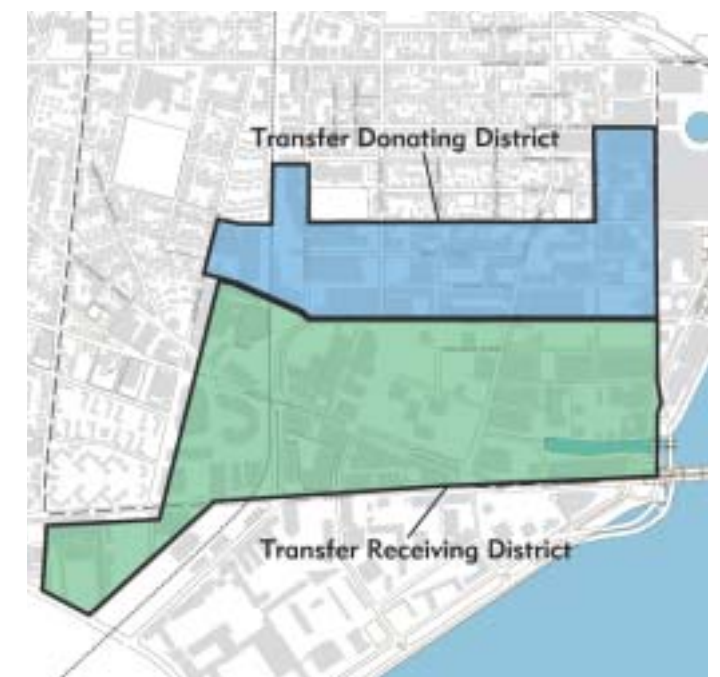
- New open spaces that connect to existing parks.
- Improved pedestrian crossings at Binney.
- Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections between the neighborhoods and Kendall Square, Central Square and the Charles River.



Urban design principles diagram shows the graduated height towards the neighborhoods as well as the desire for mixed-use development along First Street and along the edge of Area IV.



Illustrative study of height and massing decreasing towards the residential neighborhood to ensure a transition down to a scale similar to what currently exists.

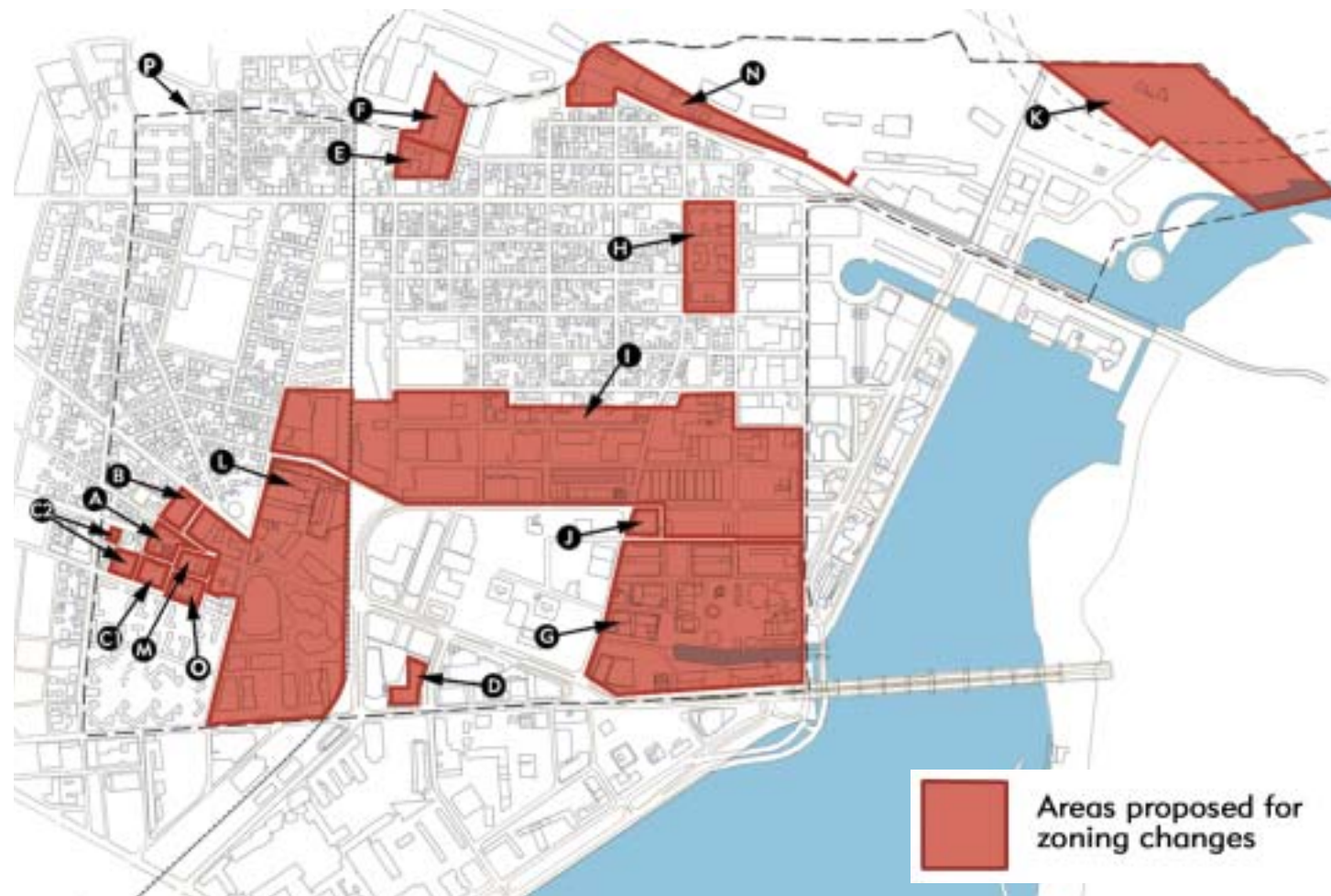


Transfer Donating and Receiving Districts proposed to encourage development where appropriate.

ADDITIONAL ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

Several other smaller areas recommended for rezoning in the Citywide Rezoning Petition are also included in the ECaPS recommendations. These include industrially and commercially zoned areas in the neighborhoods and in Transition Area B that would undergo reductions in allowed commercial density and height, and several areas that would be rezoned to bring zoning into closer conformance with existing and planned development.

- Area A Industry A, Business C, and Residence C-1 zones at Broadway
- Area B Industry B zone at Clark Street
- Area C1 Residence C-1 zone between Hampshire and Dickinson Streets
- Area C2 Industry A-1, Industry B-1 and Residence C-1 zones between Hampshire Street and Broadway.
- Area D MXD District
- Area E Business A zone between Cambridge Street and Gore Street
- Area F Business A-2 zone at Gore Street
- Area G Office 3A (PUD-3) zone
- Area H Business B zone between Second Street and Third Street
- Area I Industry A-1 zone in the Transition Area
- Area J Industry B-1 zone at Third Street and Binney Street
- Area K Industry A zone in North Point east of the Gilmore Bridge
- Area L Industry B zone west of the railroad tracks
- Area M Industry A-2 zone on Broadway
- Area N Special District 1 along Msgr. O'Brien Highway
- Area O Industry A-2 zone at Harvard Street
- Area P The entire ECaPS area (for application of Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines)



Additional zoning changes are part of the ECaPS recommendations, many of which would result in lower commercial density and height.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Eastern Cambridge Design Guidelines have been developed to inform property owners, business owners, developers, and the general public about the desired form and character of future development in the Study Area. The aim is to create consistently high-quality public environments, and to ensure that development contributes to the character and vitality of the surrounding community. The guidelines are based on the following core principles:

- Manage development to maintain livability in residential neighborhoods and ensure compatibility with existing neighborhood character.
- Provide better transitions between developed/developing areas and residential neighborhoods.
- Create new mixed-use neighborhoods at North Point and the Volpe Center that are integrated with the existing urban fabric.
- Enhance quality of life through the creation of active streets, new public open spaces, and expanded retail opportunities.
- Strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout Eastern Cambridge, especially between residential neighborhoods, Kendall Square, the Lechmere transit station, and the Charles River.

The guidelines are organized into two sections: Built Form, which addresses the use, scale, and character of buildings; and Public Realm, which addresses connections, streets and sidewalks, open space, and transportation. The detailed guidelines are attached in Appendix D.

These guidelines would be referred to by the Planning Board in their review of special permit applications for projects in the ECaPS Study Area that are before the Board if adopted by the City Council or the Planning Board.

THE DESIGN GUIDELINES ARE ORGANIZED AROUND THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF BLOCKS:

RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS

- **CREATE A CONSISTENT RESIDENTIAL EDGE**
- **INDIVIDUAL UNITS AND FRONT DOORS FACING THE STREET**
- **BLANK WALLS SHOULD BE AVOIDED**

RETAIL BLOCKS

- **AT LEAST 75 PERCENT OF THE STREET FRONTAGE SHOULD BE RETAIL**
- **MAJOR ENTRANCES SHOULD BE LOCATED ON PUBLIC STREETS**
- **BLANK WALLS SHOULD BE AVOIDED**

MIXED-USE BLOCKS

- **STREET-LEVEL FACADES SHOULD INCLUDE:**
 - **RESIDENTIAL**
 - **SHOPS, RESTAURANTS, AND CAFES**
 - **COMMUNITY SPACES**
 - **ART EXHIBITION SPACE**
 - **COMMERCIAL LOBBIES**
- **MAJOR ENTRANCES SHOULD BE LOCATED ON PUBLIC STREETS**
- **BLANK WALLS SHOULD BE AVOIDED**

TRANSITION AREAS

- ENCOURAGE NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONVERSIONS OF EXISTING BUILDINGS TO RESIDENTIAL USE BUT ALLOW EXISTING COMMERCIAL USES TO REMAIN.
- USE FINELY GRADUATED HEIGHTS TO CREATE TRANSITIONS IN SCALE FROM KENDALL SQUARE TO RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS.
- CREATE BETTER PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS, KENDALL SQUARE, CENTRAL SQUARE, AND THE CHARLES RIVER.

DESIGN GUIDELINES GOALS:

- North Point
- Transition Area A
- Transition Area B
- Volpe Center
- Residential Neighborhoods

NORTH POINT

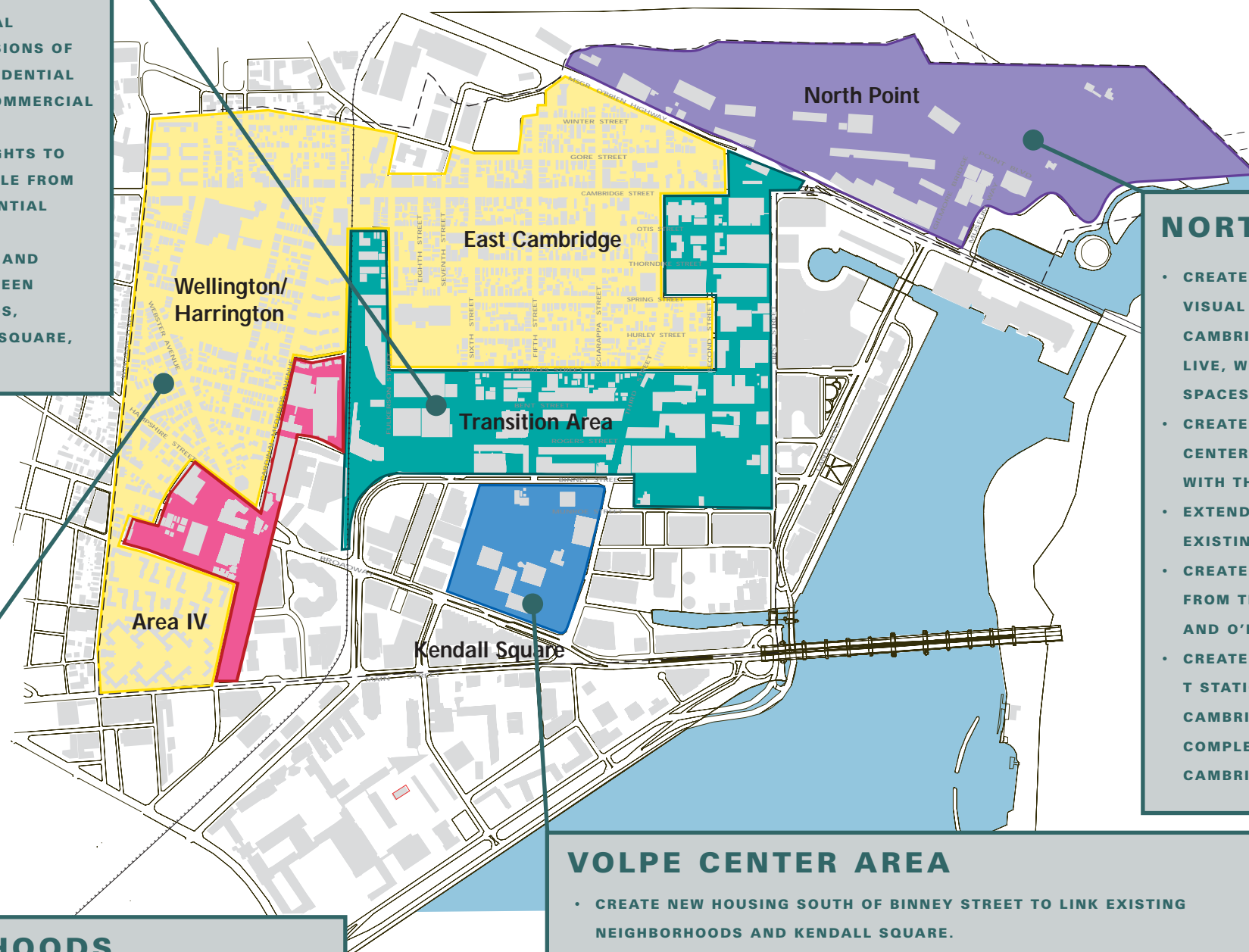
- CREATE A LIVELY NEW MIXED-USE DISTRICT WITH STRONG VISUAL AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS TO EAST CAMBRIDGE. THE NEW DISTRICT SHOULD BE A PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, AND ENJOY A VARIETY OF PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES.
- CREATE A NEW EAST-WEST MAIN STREET THROUGH THE CENTER OF NORTH POINT, CONNECTING EAST CAMBRIDGE WITH THE FUTURE MDC PARK
- EXTEND FIRST STREET INTO NORTH POINT TO CONNECT EXISTING AND NEW NEIGHBORHOODS.
- CREATE A MAJOR NEW PUBLIC PARK EASILY ACCESSIBLE FROM THE RELOCATED LECHMERE T STATION, FIRST STREET, AND O'BRIEN HIGHWAY.
- CREATE A NEW RETAIL EDGE AT THE RELOCATED LECHMERE T STATION AND AT THE INTERSECTION OF FIRST STREET, CAMBRIDGE STREET, AND O'BRIEN HIGHWAY THAT WILL COMPLEMENT, NOT COMPETE WITH, EXISTING RETAIL ON CAMBRIDGE STREET.

VOLPE CENTER AREA

- CREATE NEW HOUSING SOUTH OF BINNEY STREET TO LINK EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS AND KENDALL SQUARE.
- CREATE A MAJOR NEW PUBLIC PARK FACING BINNEY STREET, SURROUNDED BY RESIDENTIAL AND RETAIL USES.
- STRONGLY ENCOURAGE RETAIL ON THIRD STREET AND BROADWAY TO CREATE ACTIVE STREET LIFE IN KENDALL SQUARE AND TO CREATE A LIVELY CONNECTION BETWEEN THE NEIGHBORHOODS AND KENDALL SQUARE.
- CREATE A MIX OF HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL USES ALONG BROADWAY.
- CREATE A TRANSITION IN LAND USES AND HEIGHTS FROM BROADWAY TO THE RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS.

NEIGHBORHOODS

- PRESERVE AND ENHANCE NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER.
- MAINTAIN THE WALKABLE SCALE AND CHARACTER OF RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS.
- SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN BUSINESSES ON CAMBRIDGE STREET, BROADWAY, AND MAIN STREET.



NON-ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

OPEN SPACE

Open space in the study area was a major concern of the Committee and was discussed in detail at the public workshops. Using the priorities identified in the City’s Green Ribbon Open Space Committee Report of March 2000 as a basis, the ECaPS Committee identified the following open space recommendations for Eastern Cambridge:

NORTH POINT

Development of a new community at North Point will create significant open space needs. In addition, this area offers the opportunity to create open space accessible to the existing Eastern Cambridge neighborhoods. The North Point Park planned by the MDC will serve as a regional resource. In addition, the design principles developed by the Committee for North Point include the recommendation for a large park as well as a series of smaller green spaces scattered throughout the district, along the major transportation spine. The plan envisions a large park of approximately 2.5 acres to be located to serve both the residents of North Point and of Eastern Cambridge. Proximity to the new Lechmere Station would be important to provide access to the park and make it a public amenity. Plans for the Central Somerville Bike Path are under study. Development of North Point offers the opportunity to create a bike/pedestrian connection between the Somerville Bike Path and the New North Point Park, thus introducing a vital link in a regional connection.

VOLPE CENTER AREA

The Committee felt that the Volpe Center area presented the opportunity for creating a major public park to serve the needs of Eastern Cambridge. This park, visualized as a 7.5 acre park, serving both active and passive recreation needs, is to be located at the north west corner of the Volpe Center block. A park at this location would conveniently serve the existing residential neighborhoods, new housing developed in the Volpe Center area, as well as daytime users from the surrounding commercial areas. Its proximity to the Kendall Square Station would enable a park at this location to be a resource for the larger Cambridge community, too.

TRANSITION AREAS

Ahern Field, adjacent to the Robert F. Kennedy School, is a key active recreation resource for the Transition Areas. It is heavily used for school-related activities and as a playground for the East Cambridge neighborhood. Expansion of Ahern Field would allow current uses to grow in the same location, and may also allow some space for passive use.

The parks proposed at North Point and the Volpe Center offer opportunities to create landmark urban spaces that would define and focus their respective districts, enhancing the commercial and residential areas around them. The Committee is interested in seeing a diversity of uses on these open spaces spanning a range including active sports fields, relaxing contemplative areas, dog parks, tot lots, and open air performance spaces.

NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Neighborhood Transportation Plan includes a series of recommendations that focus on reducing new auto trips, influencing where traffic goes, and enhancing non-auto mobility. The strategies for meeting these objectives are

summarized below and specific measures recommended under each category are listed in Appendix F.

REDUCE NEW AUTO TRIPS

The ECaPS Committee adopted the Citywide objective to achieve a reduction in auto trip generation from new development by 50%. The key strategies to achieve this goal include:

- Incorporate zoning constraints on parking supply for new development.
- Implement demand management measures or infrastructure projects that support alternatives to driving.

INFLUENCE WHERE TRAFFIC GOES

Measures to direct traffic could be used to minimize additional traffic on neighborhood streets and to optimize vehicular, pedestrian and transit accessibility to new development. Ways to accomplish this include:

- Encourage use of First Street to Kendall Square, complementary to Land Boulevard. Key methods to accomplish this are:
 - Make the connection between First Street and Monsignor O’Brien Highway more direct.
 - Make Linskey Way two-way.
- Enhance vehicular, pedestrian, and transit access to North Point and Lechmere Station, when relocated, while minimizing traffic impacts on neighborhoods. Monsignor O’Brien Highway is under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) and improvements will require their approval. Key measures to enhance connections to North Point include:
 - Optimize North Point access by “intercepting” eastbound traffic at the earliest opportunities on Monsignor O’Brien Highway and by incorporating improved pedestrian and bicycle connections.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Improve pedestrian crossings of Monsignor O’Brien Highway.- Increase transit access to North Point. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance access to new development at the Volpe Center, while minimizing its traffic impacts on the residential neighborhoods through the following measures:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Establish principles and guidelines for roadway access.- Strengthen pedestrian connections between the residential neighborhoods and the Volpe Center block and Kendall Square.- Increase transit access to Volpe site.• Enhance access to new development in the Transition Areas, while minimizing its traffic impact on the residential neighborhoods. Key ways to accomplish this include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Establish principles and guidelines for roadway access.- Focus non-residential traffic to the transition area on Bent Street by providing for two-way traffic.- Make Linskey Way two-way.• Reduce use of neighborhood streets by auto traffic accessing development in Kendall Square.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reduce the use of the Twin City mall parking lot as a through connection between Gore Street and Monsignor O’Brien Highway.- Reduce use of Fulkerson and Charles streets by automobiles leaving the parking garage on Little Binney Street without shifting traffic to other residential streets.• Reduce traffic speed and improve safety within the residential neighborhoods.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pursue traffic calming initiatives in accordance with current City criteria and procedures, which include	<p>traffic speed, location of schools, location of playgrounds, and coordination with other City projects. Traffic calming involves the physical redesign of roadways to reduce traffic speeds and balance the needs of all users through safety enhancements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reduce impact of truck traffic on residential neighborhood streets by restricting truck routes within the study area, in coordination with the recently-concluded regional truck study and the truck plan for the City.	<p>one-way street patterns from hampering bicycle mobility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Maximize opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Charles River waterfront.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide safe crossings of Land Boulevard and Memorial Drive. These streets are under the jurisdiction of the MDC and improvements require their approval.- Enhance pedestrian environment on First Street.
	<p>ENHANCE NON-AUTO MOBILITY</p> <p>To maximize non-auto mobility and reduce the dependence on automobiles the following improvements are proposed within and beyond the ECaPS study area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximize system-wide transit accessibility in the study area and connections with regional MBTA network by supporting planned public transit infrastructure projects such as the Urban Ring and the Green Line Extension as well as transportation demand management measures.• Improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility.<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Develop stronger linkages between the neighborhoods and the Kendall Square area.- Enhance pedestrian environment throughout the study area.- Improve pedestrian crossings.- Provide/facilitate bicycle facilities along all major arterial and collectors in the study area.- Maximize opportunities for off-road bicycle and pedestrian pathways between Eastern Cambridge and other parts of the City and region, such as along the Grand Junction corridor and at North Point.- Evaluate street network in terms of its impact on bicycle mobility in the neighborhoods and prevent	<p>Roadway improvements proposed in this report would be implemented either by the City or by developers in conjunction with development projects. Such improvements include laying out new streets and extending existing streets into North Point and the Volpe Center. Developers would be responsible for the creation of these streets.</p> <p>Some of the recommended improvements are already required as part of special permit approvals. For example, improvements at Broadway and Hampshire are required as part of Tech Square and 7 Cambridge Center special permits and the improvements at the Second and Binney are required through the Beal and Cambridge Research Park special permits.</p> <p>The City undertakes roadway projects such as traffic calming, intersection improvements, and changes to traffic patterns, contingent on need and the availability of funds. Starting in 2002, the City will reconstruct Cambridge Street. This will involve roadway reconstruction as well as pedestrian and bicycle improvements, including new sidewalks and curb extensions, new street trees and street lighting, and new street furnishings such as trash receptacles, benches, and bicycle parking.</p>

RETAIL STRATEGY

The retail strategy for Eastern Cambridge is intended to strengthen and reinforce existing retail centers, while promoting additional retail opportunities that serve both residents and employees. The recommendations that follow are based on four key objectives:

Encourage retail development where it can make the greatest contribution to the vitality of Eastern Cambridge.

- A key component of the retail strategy is to direct new retail to locations where it can reasonably be expected to succeed. The goal is to create vibrant retail areas that build on existing centers of activity, rather than diluting new retail throughout Eastern Cambridge. More specifically,

the intent is to support and strengthen the existing Cambridge Street corridor, and to concentrate new retail at the First Street/Cambridge Street intersection and along Third Street adjacent to Kendall Square.

Encourage new retail that promotes a lively and active pedestrian environment in Eastern Cambridge.

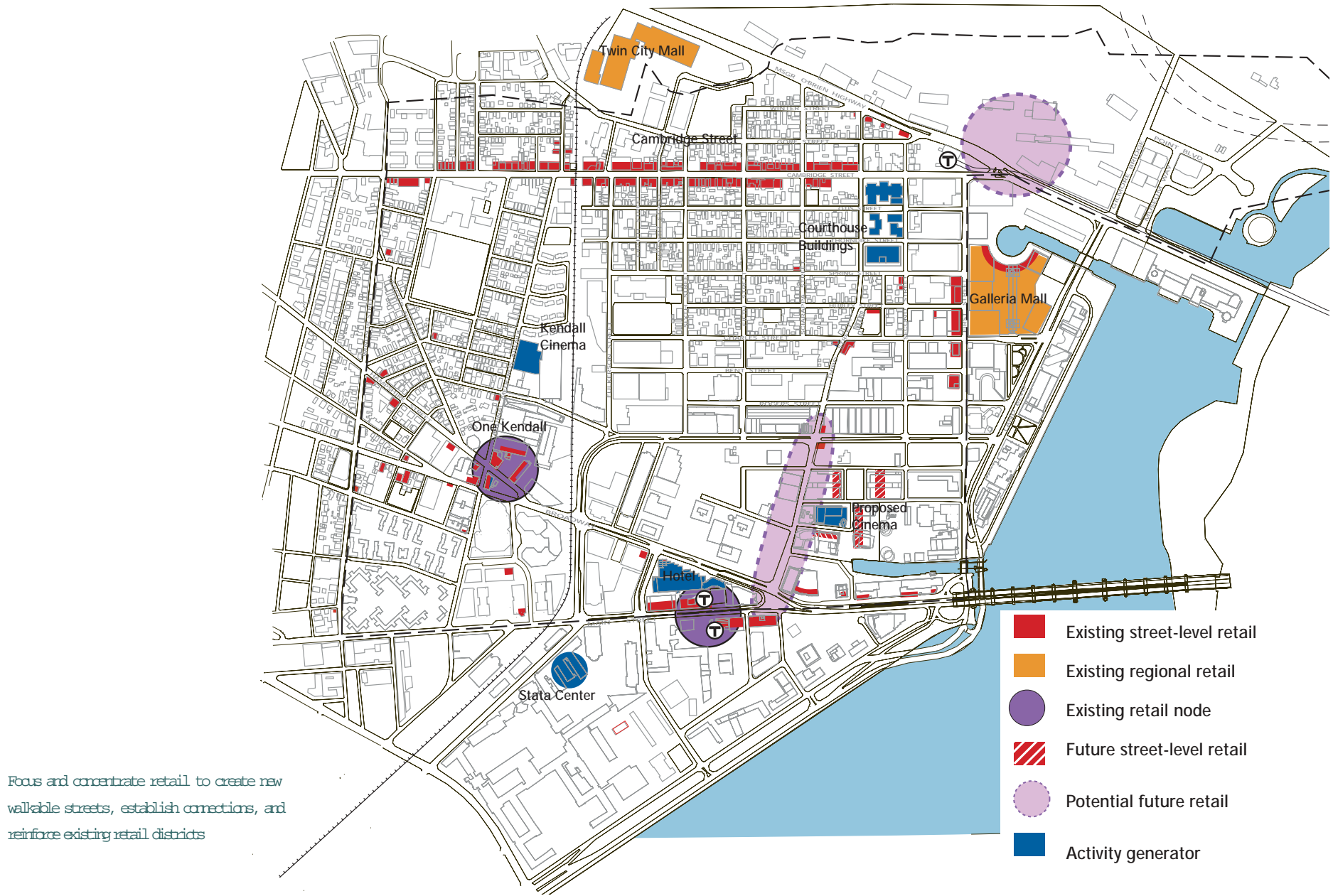
- Street-level retail can play an essential role in supporting active pedestrian environments. Street-level retail also provides additional “eyes on the street” contributing to a greater sense of public safety. New street-level retail in Eastern Cambridge should be designed to support pedestrian activity and create better connections between neighborhoods and commercial areas.

Enhance retail opportunities for residents of the neighborhood.

- Currently, neighborhood residents are served by a mix of retail uses on Cambridge Street, First Street, and within the neighborhoods. As part of the ECaPS planning process, residents expressed a desire to strengthen and improve businesses on Cambridge Street, as well as to enliven Kendall Square and support the development of new neighborhood-serving retail including green grocers, bookstores, and cafes.

Support entrepreneurial growth and investment (including assistance to Cambridge Street businesses and property owners) to preserve and enhance the ability of independent proprietors to succeed.

- Cambridge Street is a unique retail environment, with a diversity of shops and services that reflect the neighborhoods it serves. Most businesses on Cambridge Street are independent proprietorships, characterized by low sales volumes and low rents. New retail initiatives should aim to preserve the unique character of Cambridge Street while supporting entrepreneurial growth and investment.



RECOMMENDATIONS

CAMBRIDGE AND FIRST STREET

The City of Cambridge has several initiatives completed or underway to strengthen the Cambridge Street retail corridor.

The Cambridge Street Streetscape Improvement Plan is an \$11,000,000 project that will involve roadway reconstruction of Cambridge Street as well as pedestrian and bicycle improvements such as new sidewalks and curb extensions, new street trees and street lighting, and new street furnishings such as trash receptacles, benches, and bicycle parking. Parks and plazas along the corridor – the Valente Library Park, Millers River Park, and Vellucci Plaza at Inman Square – will be reconstructed. The Facade Improvement Program offers technical and financial assistance (matching grants of up to \$35,000 for exterior rehabilitation) to property owners or tenants seeking to renovate or restore Cambridge Street building facades of commercial and mixed-use structures. To date, this program had funded the improvement of twelve facades that are complete or in progress.

The City has also been instrumental in helping retailers to organize a business association. The Cambridge Street Business Association could participate in a number of initiatives to strengthen Cambridge Street, including marketing initiatives to create theming and identity; coordinating special events to raise the street’s profile; addressing the lack of unity/cohesion perceived by existing proprietors; and identifying specific merchandise types or tenants not currently located in the area.

The intersection of Cambridge Street and First Street is an important gateway to Eastern Cambridge, carrying high volumes of vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The adjacent MBTA Lechmere Station also serves as a major transit link to destinations in Cambridge and throughout the region. This area will become even more important in the future, as North Point is fully developed and transit service to Lechmere is expanded.

As this occurs, the market for convenience retail will grow substantially with the influx of new residents and commuters. This creates an opportunity for new street-level retail that can act as an anchor for Cambridge Street and a bridge to North Point. The potential relocation of Lechmere Station and extension of First Street across Monsignor O’Brien Highway would create a further opportunity to transform this intersection, establishing a welcoming new gateway to the district. New retail at the intersection of Cambridge and First and along the extension of First Street into North Point can create additional support for area businesses, drawing future residents and transit users onto Cambridge Street.

NORTH POINT

As North Point develops, new retail is likely to include a mix of independent proprietorships and regional retailers. New retail should be focused on convenience, including restaurants, convenience grocery, video, dry cleaning, coffee shops, flowers, sundries, and prepared foods. Retail economics in this area are likely to be characterized by mid- to high sales volumes and mid- to high-priced rents. The magnitude of supportable new retail is roughly 35,000 to 50,000 square feet at full build-out of North Point. The zoning recommendations of this study, described in the previous section, are intended to encourage retail that supports, rather than competes with, existing businesses, and that strengthens pedestrian connections to North Point.

Retail is permitted on the street level of any building. The first 50,000 square feet of street-level retail within a 500-foot radius of the intersection of Cambridge and First Street is exempt from the 35 percent commercial gross floor area (GFA) limit.

To prevent big-box development, the maximum floor area for a retail establishment is 10,000 square feet. To encourage pedestrian activity and support transit use, accessory parking is not required for street-level retail.

THIRD STREET

The potential redevelopment of the Volpe Center area offers an opportunity to create street-level retail along Third Street, and to bring new vitality to Kendall Square. The existing shops and restaurants on Main Street can become the core of an expanded commercial district that serves local residents, employees, and visitors. In the great tradition of Cambridge squares, Kendall Square can become a unique retail district that is active throughout the day and evening. New shops and restaurants should draw on the growing employee and resident population, with a mix of uses to serve a variety of needs. The new retail and multifunctional theater venues planned for Cambridge Research Park on the east side of Third Street will create a major new activity center, setting the stage for development of the Volpe Center area. A new retail corridor along Third Street will also help to create a better pedestrian connection from the adjoining neighborhoods to the Kendall Square transit station.

New retail on Third Street is likely to include a mix of independent proprietorships and regional retailers. The focus should be on convenience, including restaurants, convenience grocery, video, dry cleaning, coffee shops, flowers, sundries, prepared foods. Retail economics on Third Street are likely to be characterized by high sales volumes and high-priced rents. The magnitude of supportable new retail is roughly 50,000 to 70,000 square feet at full build out of the Volpe site. The zoning recommendations of this study, described in the previous section, are intended to encourage new retail that will add vitality to Kendall Square, and create better pedestrian connections between adjacent neighborhoods and commercial areas. For further details on recommended zoning, see Chapter 6.

The first 50,000 square feet of street-level retail along Third Street or fronting a public park is exempt from the 750,000 square foot commercial gross floor area (GFA) limit. To prevent big-box development, the maximum floor area for

a retail establishment is 10,000 square feet. To encourage pedestrian activity and support transit use, accessory parking is not required for street-level retail.

NOISE IMPACTS

As part of the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study, concerns were raised about the level of noise emitted by mechanical equipment in R&D buildings in the Kendall Square area. Other uses such as loading docks, construction, and related material delivery activity, other generators of noise were also discussed. Many homes in the study area are located close to commercial and R&D uses, particularly in the Transition Areas. Residents are particularly concerned about the cumulative impact of noise from existing and future office, R&D, and telecommunications development. The noise was identified as a constant presence in the neighborhood, and described as buzzing, humming, or whirring sounds. As more telecom and biotech buildings are constructed, residents are concerned that noise levels will increase.

CURRENT CITY ORDINANCE

Currently, the City of Cambridge Noise Control Ordinance (Chapter 8.16 Noise Control) regulates excessive noise levels based on the predominant use in the area. The ordinance measures noise impacts at the lot line of affected properties. In addition to establishing these limits, the Noise Ordinance controls specific “non-measured noise disturbances,” which include vibration, construction noise, car horns and other street sounds, car and other alarms, and animal noises, among others. These are “declared to be loud, disturbing, and unnecessary noises,” which are illegal, unless a variance has been granted by the License Commission.

RECOMMENDATION

In May 2001, the City Council requested the City Manager and the Community Development Department to convene a task force including residents, business owners, members from the biotech communities and members of the Planning Board to examine standards for rooftop and other building related mechanical equipment. This task force will be charged with examining the noise as well as aesthetic impact of mechanical equipment and will assess the need for additional regulations.

